



Library Council for Diversity & Inclusion Badge

UNT Libraries Land Acknowledgment Creation Guide

This document is intended to be a resource for library employees who wish to create a land acknowledgment for various aspects of their work. Creating land acknowledgments is not required, and they represent the perspective of the individual not the libraries or university.



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What is a Land Acknowledgment?

A land acknowledgment is a formal statement that acknowledges and sincerely respects Indigenous Peoples, their traditional and current territories and their relationships with that land, water, and air as well as their historical and current oppression in a local and national context. Land acknowledgments aim to connect a person and their institution as active actors in past, current, and future colonialism. They are affirmed by many critical theories and practices working to make academia more equitable and inclusive. Land acknowledgments are also traditional, historical, contemporary practices by Indigenous People. Making a land acknowledgment honors this praxis. In academia, land acknowledgments may be given at conferences, webinars, lectures, presentations, or events where research, scholarship, and/or learning is happening to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples and the land on which the institution stands, where the event is taking place, and/or where the presenter lives.

Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context, because colonialism is a current ongoing process. Library employees will need to build their mindfulness of present participation in colonial and systematic oppressive research, scholarship, and teaching behaviors in order to do these activities without continuing violence to Indigenous Peoples. Ways to start this awareness include acknowledging which Indigenous People have relationships with the land on which the institution operates, investigating their history and modern context, and acknowledging the destructive effects of colonization. Through these inquiries, employees can understand how their academic institution has been involved in the processes that exploit Indigenous People. Thus, the Library Council on Diversity and Inclusion encourages library employees to develop their own unique land acknowledgments based on the purpose of the land acknowledgments in relation to their work. This work requires research and reflection.

There are no templates for land acknowledgments. However, individuals researching land acknowledgments will see common phrases and ideas that communicate Indigenous Peoples as “traditional stewards” of the land, that elders are to be respected and honored, that “violence to either the land or people is violence to the other,” that “colonialism is ongoing,” that land taken from Indigenous People is “occupied, unceded, and/or seized,” and that Indigenous People face genocide, oppression, and erasure. While such phrases may be common, a person writing a land statement should choose the best words that reflect the situations and circumstances of the Indigenous Peoples being recognized on the land acknowledgment, be sincere and genuine, and convey their own ideas and thoughts.

The Council has compiled resources that may be helpful for library employees in developing their land acknowledgments.



An icon depicting two right hands one on top of the other

How to Begin Researching for a Land Acknowledgment

To begin this research, consider:

1. Identifying on whose land the institution is occupying.
2. Identifying additional Indigenous People who may have land relationships in that area.
3. Doing reflective, critical questioning about why you are creating a land acknowledgment.
4. Researching the local history of the Indigenous People you are acknowledging.
5. Researching the websites of Indigenous People you are acknowledging.
6. Researching conservation efforts of the land you are acknowledging.
7. Researching local movements that empower the Indigenous People you are acknowledging.

Indigenous People from the Denton, North Texas Area



Icon of Texas with a star over the Dallas/Fort Worth/Denton area

The University of North Texas has identified tribes that they officially acknowledge as shown in the example from the UNT Pride Alliance. This land acknowledgment has been adopted and used by several UNT departments at conferences and events sponsored at or by UNT.

In addition to these tribes, LCDI members have researched Indigenous territories and found that UNT owns or operates on territories from other Indigenous peoples that lived or nomadically traveled in the North Texas and Oklahoma area, including the Wichita, Caddo, Tawakoni, Kiikaapoi/Kickappoo, and Jumano peoples.

The resources below can help started learning about these tribes and identifying which tribes may be appropriated to include in your land acknowledgment.

- Wichita (wi-chuh-taa) and Affiliated Tribes: [Oklahoma History: Wichita](#)¹
- Caddo (ka-dow) Affiliated Tribes: [Texas State Historical Association: Caddo](#)²
- Tawakoni (taa-wuh-kaa-nee): [Oklahoma History: Tawakoni](#)³
- Kiikaapoi/Kickappoo (kia-kaa-poi/ ki-kuh-poo): [Oklahoma History: Kickapoo](#)⁴, [Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas](#)⁵, and [History of the Mexican Kickapoo](#)⁶
- Jumanos (ju-ma-no): [Texas State Historical Association: Jumano](#)⁷ and [Jumano Nation](#)⁸

Tips and Reflective Questioning



An icon of a speech bubble with a question mark inside

The following texts are from resources that LCDI members have used to develop their own land acknowledgments. See the footnotes for resource information.

Tips for Creating an Indigenous Land Acknowledgment Statement ⁹

Start with self-reflection. Before starting work on your land acknowledgment statement, reflect on the process:

- Why am I doing this land acknowledgment? (If you're hoping to inspire others to take action to support Indigenous communities, you're on the right track. If you're delivering a land acknowledgment out of guilt or because everyone else is doing it, more self-reflection is in order.)
- What is my end goal? (What do you hope listeners will do after hearing the acknowledgment?)
- When will I have the largest impact? (Think about your timing and audience, specifically.)

Do your homework. Put in the time necessary to research the following topics:

- The Indigenous people to whom the land belongs.
- The history of the land and any related treaties.
- Names of living Indigenous people from these communities. If you're presenting on behalf of your work in a certain field, highlight Indigenous people who currently work in that field.
- Indigenous place names and language.
- Correct pronunciation for the names of the Tribes, places, and individuals that you're including.

Use appropriate language. Don't sugarcoat the past. Use terms like genocide, ethnic cleansing, stolen land, and forced removal to reflect actions taken by colonizers.

Use past, present, and future tenses. Indigenous people are still here, and they're thriving. Don't treat them as a relic of the past¹⁰.

Land acknowledgments shouldn't be grim. They should function as living celebrations of Indigenous communities. Ask yourself, "How am I leaving Indigenous people in a stronger, more empowered place because of this land acknowledgment?" Focus on the positivity of who Indigenous people are today.

Additional factors to consider:

Don't ask an Indigenous person to deliver a "welcome" statement for your organization. Cantemaza McKay (Spirit Lake Nation) explains this very clearly. Check out [the land acknowledgment event livestream](#)¹¹, and hear his comments at the 27-minute mark.

Build real, authentic relationships with Indigenous people. In addition to normal employment and family obligations, Indigenous people are working to heal their traumas, learn their languages, and support their nations. If you reach out for help, lead the conversation by asking an Indigenous person what you can do for them. Chances are, they're likely overworked and could use your help.

Compensate Indigenous people for their emotional labor.¹² If you do plan to reach out to an Indigenous person or community for help, compensate them fairly. Too often, Indigenous people are asked to perform emotional labor for free.

Understand displacement and how that plays into land acknowledgment. Land acknowledgment is complicated. Remember that the United States government displaced many Tribes from land before treaties were signed.

There are many types of land acknowledgments. Don't expect to find a specific formula or template. Land acknowledgments that come from Indigenous people vs. non-Indigenous people look different, too.

Questions to Consider when Developing a Land Acknowledgment¹³

1. Who is/are the Indigenous nation(s) that have always lived in the place you call home? What names do the tribe(s) go by, their traditional names vs the name given to them by colonizers, and how are they pronounced?
2. How does language affect the identity of the Indigenous people? Do the Indigenous people share affiliations with other Indigenous peoples because of a shared language or language family or not? For example, colonizers and later researchers have categorized some Indigenous peoples together based on the language or root-language used by them despite social, economic, and political relationships between the peoples. Names of languages, typically words developed by colonizers, have also been used as a substitute for traditional tribal names.¹⁴ Has this happened to the Indigenous people you are researching?
3. What did historical colonization look like on that land? When would your family have started interacting with the land and its people?
4. What does current colonization look like on that land? What has been the impact to Indigenous people, the land, and ecosystem?
5. Have there been any treaties relating to that land? Under what conditions were the treaties signed, according to the signatory Indigenous nations? How are these treaties being broken? Where would you find out what treaty responsibilities cover the lands that you live on (if those lands are under treaty)?
6. Were there any Indian boarding schools (forced residential schools, sometimes called 'industrial schools') or missions here? When did they close? What impact have these boarding schools had on Indigenous children's identity?
7. When and how were Indigenous people killed, forcibly relocated, or moved? How is this still happening there? (ie. displacement through land theft, high rates of incarceration, police violence, missing or murdered Indigenous women, suicide, or other ways.)

8. In your area, do indigenous people try to pass as white and/or assimilate into another culture in order to survive? Have they in the past?
9. What did you/do you learn about Indigenous peoples in school?
10. Are you told stories in your family about indigenous people/ancestors? If so, are they true and what purpose do they serve?
11. What are local Indigenous people in your community or region organizing around/on?
12. Do Indigenous people in your area have stewardship/ownership/free and full access to their land and water?
13. What watershed is connected to the place that you call home?
14. Do Indigenous people in your area have access to stable, well-paying employment?
15. Do you or people you organize with have relationships with Indigenous communities or organizers? Are you connecting your work with their work?
16. What are Indigenous organizers calling for - their visions or demands? What would achieving those visions mean for the place you call home? How can you work towards supporting those visions or demands?

Land Acknowledgment Examples*

**These examples should not be copied verbatim. Employees are encouraged to be reflective and create their own.*

UNT Pride Alliance¹⁵

The Pride Alliance strives to work toward racial justice and decolonization. Part of that work includes reading a Land Acknowledgment before programs and gatherings. This Land Acknowledgment was written in collaboration with the UNT Native American Student Association. More information about their organization can be found on the [UNT NASA website](#)¹⁶.

Statement

Before we begin, I would like to read a land acknowledgment. Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory we reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long existing history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol. We would like to open our event today by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the occupied/unceded/seized territory of the Wichita and Caddo Affiliated Tribes. These tribes have stewarded this land throughout the generations and we would like to pay our respects to elders, both past and present.

Resources

- [UNT Land Acknowledgment](#)¹⁷
- [Native Land](#)¹⁸
- [A guide to Indigenous land acknowledgment](#)¹⁹
- [Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State](#)²⁰
- [American Indian Movement Wikipedia](#)²¹
- [American Indian Movement](#)²²
- [21-Day Racial Equity Indigenous Challenge – Fighting White Supremacy Since 1492](#)²³
- [A Just Transition](#)²⁴
- [Maslow got it wrong](#)²⁵
- [Reclaiming Native Truth](#)²⁶
- [Catalyst Project](#)²⁷

Do you have questions about creating a Land Acknowledgment for a library event or program? Current and past members of the [Library Council on Diversity and Inclusion](#)²⁸ can help.

Endnotes

- 1 From The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, “Wichita,” <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=WI001>.
- 2 From the Handbook of Texas Online (2020), “Caddo Indians,” <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/caddo-indians>.
- 3 From the Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, “Tawakoni,” <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=TA015>.
- 4 From the Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, “Kickapoo,” <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=KI004>.
- 5 From the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, “Home,” <https://kickapootexas.org>.
- 6 From The Milwaukee Public Museum, “History of the Mexican Kickapoo,” <https://www.mpm.edu/research-collections/anthropology/online-collections-research/mexican-kickapoo/history>.
- 7 From The Handbook of Texas online (2020), “Texas State Historical Association: Junamo,” <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/jumano-indians>.
- 8 From the Junamo Nation, “Home,” <https://www.jumano-nation.com>.
- 9 From Native Governance Center (n.d.), “Indigenous Land Acknowledgement,” <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>.
- 10 From Reclaiming Native Truth, “Changing the Narrative About Native Americans,” <https://illuminatives.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MessageGuide-Allies-screen-spreads.pdf>.
- 11 From the Native Governance Center, “Land Acknowledgment Event Livestream,” <https://www.facebook.com/nativegov/videos/496079564277950/>.
- 12 Defined as “the process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job” in Hochschild, Arlie Russell (1983). “The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling.” Berkeley: University of California Press; Accessed from Wikipedia (2021), “Emotional labor,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_labor#cite_note-Hochschild_Book-1.

- 13 Adapted from Catalyst Project (2020), “Homework: Questions about Home,” <https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Indigenous-Resistance-Homework.pdf> and Class Traitors Network (2020), “Tag: decolonization,” <https://classtraitors.network/tag/decolonization/>.
- 14 Examples: 1) People and nations speaking Iroquois, Algonquin, and Caddo both had this experience. In the case of the people speaking Iroquois, Iroquois is the name developed by colonizers and is used to identify various Indigenous peoples from the North East who all spoke the same language. Haudenosaunee is the traditional name of a specific group of people who speak the Iroquois language. The term Iroquois has been used to identify the Haudenosaunee people and associate other peoples with them. NY Museum (2014), “Haudenosaunee or Iroquois?” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSXL33JiKLY>; 2) In the case of the Tawakoni, after they assisted in a peace treaty in 1835, the US government began referring to them as Wichita because they speak Caddo like the tribes of the Wichita and Waco People. However, Tawakoni descendants did not formally join the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes confederacy until the twenty-first century. Julie Bennett-Jones, “Tawakoni,” The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=TA015>.
- 15 From UNT Pride Alliance (2021), “Land Acknowledgement,” <https://ied.unt.edu/land-acknowledgement>.
- 16 From the UNT Native American Student Association, <https://www.untnasa.com>.
- 17 From the UNT Division of Institutional Equity & Diversity (2020), “Land Acknowledgment,” <https://ied.unt.edu/land-acknowledgement>.
- 18 From Native Land Digital, “Native Land Map,” <https://native-land.ca>.
- 19 From The Native Governance Center, “A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment,” <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>.
- 20 From the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, “Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State,” <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/time-immemorial-tribal-sovereignty-washington-state>.
- 21 From Wikipedia, “The American Indian Movement,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Indian_Movement.
- 22 From the American Indian Movement, <http://www.aimovement.org>.
- 23 From America & Moore, “21-Day Racial Equity Indigenous Challenge – Fighting White Supremacy Since 1492,” <https://www.eddiemoorej.com/21-day-racial-equity-indigenous-challenge>.
- 24 From the Indigenous Environmental Network, “Just Transition,” <https://www.ienearth.org/justtransition/>.
- 25 From GatherFor, “Could the Blackfoot Wisdom that Inspired Maslow Guide Us Now?” <https://gatherfor.medium.com/maslow-got-it-wrong-ae45d6217a8c>.
- 26 From Reclaiming Native Truth, “A Project to Dispel America’s Myths and Misconceptions,” <https://rnt.firstnations.org>.
- 27 From Collective Liberation, <https://collectiveliberation.org>.
- 28 Email the Library Council on Diversity and Inclusion, librarydiversitycouncil@myunt.onmicrosoft.com



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